

Orville Godwin was on the USS Oklahoma that morning. He had just finished breakfast and was sitting on the side of the ship. "We actually watched them bomb the hangars, and didn't know what was taking place," he said.

"Then the first torpedo plane came over us and we looked up and saw that old red sun, and we knew what was going on. So we started in for our battle stations. I was on a broadside gun, and we didn't have anything to do. In an air attack we were supposed to seek cover on a third deck."

"I started to the third deck and explosions were blowing most of us back through the portholes as fast as we went through them," Godwin said. "(The ship) started listing over so bad we figured we didn't have any business on the third deck so we stayed up."

"Me and another kid actually opened up one of the hatches, which was supposed to be a water tight hatch and kept closed during an engagement. But the ship was listing over so bad and the kids were trying to get out from below deck. We undugged it and opened it up. It couldn't have been anymore than probably 10 minutes and the ship had rolled over so far that when we opened it the hatch was lying flat on the deck."

"About that time the ship gave a big lurch," he said, "and when it did I got trapped. Me and another kid got trapped up in a corner where there was a little pocket of air, and we were trapped in there for about eight hours. Our air was going to run out and we had to do something."

"We realized we were standing on a breech of a broadside gun extended out the side of the ship," Godwin said. "We took a big breath and just swam underneath the water and followed the breech — the barrel of the gun — to the outside."

"We came up between the ships," he said. "Of course, the oil was all on fire in between the ships, and we kept the water rolling enough so we got away. We both got burned a little bit — not bad. We went on board the USS Maryland. She was a flag ship. We went over and picked up another kid."



Godwin and the other two were the only ones from their division who survived to get off the Oklahoma.

He continued, "It was getting quite dark and there was a lot of ammunition being fired. A lot of shell bursts. We figured we had to get in for protection from shrapnel. We went into this one little building, we didn't any of us know what it was. There were a couple, three cans in there."

"We went in and sat down and lit up a cigarette. I said, 'I wonder what this building is?' Another kid said, 'I don't know.' So I struck a match and looked down. I was sitting on a keg of black powder. We left there real quick."

Eventually Godwin transferred aboard the North Hampton. He also lost two other ships besides the Oklahoma, the North Hampton and the 158 PT Boat.